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INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING BIRDS' EGGS.

BY WILLIAM WOOD, M.D.

I WISH to say a few words for the benefit of those engaged in collecting oölogical specimens.

Twenty years ago, all eggs were blown with two holes—one at each end, and until within ten years most eggs have been emptied with two holes as above, or at the side. Very many of the eggs which I now receive in my exchanges are similarly prepared. At the present time no experienced collector ever makes but one hole to remove the contents of the egg, using a blowpipe in some form to accomplish this object. The following rules should invariably be followed.

1st. Prepare your eggs neat and clean. There is no excuse for having a dirty set of eggs where water, soap, and a tooth brush can be found. Some eggs will not bear washing, as the shell is so calcareous that the characteristic markings will wash away. There are, however, but few of this class, and I believe this peculiarity is confined to the water-birds. You can see it in any of the species (Smithsonian Catalogue) from 615 to 628 inclusive, and also in the eggs of the Grebes and Flamingo, and some others. Having once seen it you will never mistake it for anything else.

2d. Make but one hole, and that a small one in the middle of the egg—cover this hole, when the contents are removed and the specimen is dry, with gold-beater skin or the paper number indicating the bird. Use an egg drill or a pointed wire of four or six sides to make the opening.

3d. If the blowpipe does not readily remove the contents of the egg, inject water and shake the specimen thoroughly, then blow again, and repeat the operation until every particle of the egg is removed.

4th. If the embryo is too far advanced to remove through a moderate sized hole, blow out what you can of the liquid part and fill the egg with water, wipe it dry and put it away in a covered box in some warm place, and every 24 or 48 hours shake it well and remove what you can, and then refill with water. Repeat this operation several times, and after a few days the contents will become sufficiently decomposed to take away.

5th. After removing the contents of any egg cleanse the shell thoroughly. Fill it with clean water and shake vigorously, blow out the contents and repeat the operation until the specimen is perfectly clean. This is particularly desirable in white eggs, as black spots will show through the shell after a time if the least particle of the egg or blood stains remains inside.

6th. Save all your eggs in sets—that is, keep all the eggs each bird lays by themselves. This is the only way to form a correct knowledge of the eggs of any species, as a single egg, particularly of the blotched ones, frequently gives a very erroneous idea of the general markings—a very unsatisfactory representative of a set. For instance, in my collection are four eggs of the *Buteo lineatus*, found in the same nest, two of which are pure white and two blotched. It is not very uncommon to find great variations in markings in the same species and in the same nest.

7th. Keep a memorandum of the place and date of collecting each set of eggs.

8th. Use some kind of a blowpipe in preparing your eggs for the cabinet. The common blowpipe, with the addition of a fine pointed tip, will answer; yet it is a severe tax on the lungs and brain if you have many eggs to blow. I have many a time been dizzy and almost blind from overtaxing my lungs in this operation. Within a few years Mr. E. W. Ellsworth, of East Windsor Hill, Conn., has invented a blowpipe which is operated by the thumb and finger, which works very perfectly and expeditiously. I would not be without it on any account. After using it for a time, and then letting it remain unused until the leather packing becomes dry, the instrument does not work satisfactorily to those unaccustomed to it. The remedy is simple. Take off the blowpipe and work the instrument submerged in a bowl of warm soap suds, when the leather packing becomes pliable and works as well as new. I have used the same instrument six years, and it works to-day as well as when new by following the above directions. The printed directions which accompany each instrument are intended to be a sufficient guide in case repairs are needed, and the maker can be referred to for any further information required.